

God of Thunder, Hear Me Roar

by ilikeexploding

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Summary: Toothless, the greatest warrior on Berk. Hiccup, the greatest failure in dragon history. By all means one of them should have died that night. And, for some reason, neither of them did. Because some people were not meant to fulfill their birthright. Some people were meant for greater things.

## 1. Backfire

\*\*Hi everyone! This is my first story, and I'm really excited to be here. Constructive criticism would really be appreciated :) Thank you!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>This...is Berk. It's the loveliest place in the world, if I do say so myself. It hails nine months of the year and snows the other three. Nothing grows on this hunk of rock except weeds and lichen. Oh, and we get dragon raids too. Isn't it absolutely <em>brilliant</em>?

Speaking of dragons...

\_MRRRRRRREEEEEEEEEEAAAAAAAARRRRRRRRRRRRRRR!

\_PAFF!\_

"BEASTS! BEASTS! YOU BEASTS!"

Here they come.

It's not that hard to see them - streaks of fire flying across the sky aren't that, well, inconspicuous. Even from my position - in my secret tree house at the top of the tallest tree over by Raven's Point - they're highly visible. Which is good. I can see the dragons

from here, but I can't actually feel the fire.

They'll probably be screaming something like, "WHAT ARE YOU DOING OVER THERE? GET OUTSIDE!"

They always need me for something. It's like the concept of personal privacy â€“ taken to the extremes in my case â€“ is completely foreign to them.

It probably is.

Outside of Berk I'm their pride and joy. Always being bragged about. The kid who downed more dragons than half the village combined before he ever started formal training. Of course this kid's never actually killed a dragon, but he might as well have, because a downed dragon is a dead dragon, and as long as they're falling out of the sky for the grown-ups to find on the ground, does it matter?

But inside the village I'm probably the most unconventional hero they've ever had. Not like my father, Chief Stoick. He's the typical Viking. Killed a dragon before he left the cradle. He's about the size of a house and even less difficult to notice. But most importantly - people know him. And he makes an effort to go out and get to know people. He's a fierce warrior but also a beloved chief. He's popular, friendly to his men, and as far from obscure as anyone can get.

Not like me. It's an understatement to say I'm not the most sociable person. I hate company. It sucks. Maybe it would be better if I lived in a city on the Continent - at least not everybody there is a massive, brawny, bloodthirsty Viking. Is it really so hard for a guy to be able to get a little bit of peace and quiet without someone screaming "ARRRRGH!" every two seconds?

"ARRRRGH!"

See? What did I tell you?

I recognize this "ARRRRGH!" actually. It's Snotlout. My cousin. Of course, he's currently down there in Berk, and I'm up here at the top of a tree in Raven's Point. So either I have astonishingly good hearing, or his "ARRRRGH!" is just that much louder and more obnoxious that it can carry so far over the din of the rest of the "ARRRRGH!s" of everyone else in the village combined.

Take it however you will.

The first time we met, I was still a baby, and he was a toddler. He tried to push me over. I responded by throwing the closest thing at hand at his face.

Now, being the scrawny person I am, it probably wasn't anything heavier than a toy block, but I did manage to hit his nose in just the right spot to permanently dent it.

Permanently dented nose. Maybe that's why his voice grates on my ears so much.

Since then we've had a sort of a truce. He doesn't push me over, and I don't throw stuff at him.

We're not on bad terms, but not on good terms, either. (Not that I'm ever on good terms with anybody.) He's a typical Viking. As tough as a nail, as thick as a barrel, and as dumb as a box of rocks. But slightly smarter than the twins, Ruffnut and Tuffnut, who are dumb\_er\_ than a box of rocks. Those twoâ€|they take the meaning of "dumb blondes" to a whole \_new \_level.

As in, there could be fire and dragons raging around them for all they cared â€" and they'd still be fighting over who gets the cool bucket. Sometimes I wonder if their stupidity is actually a secret stroke of genius, because, amazingly, they're not dead yet. I could just imagine the two of them hitting Odin himself in the face with a stray fist as the god reached down from the heavens to try to pry them apart.

They haven't smacked Odin in the face yet, but there's always a lucky victim every night. On this night, it's Fishlegs. A shame. I can actually tolerate him. Mainly because he doesn't go out of his way to try to talk to me about, well, stupid things. We're both loners, although for opposite reasons. I'm a loner because I choose to be; he's a loner because he has no choice. It's like comparing a panther to a beached whale.

Despite that he's not yet at the level of the village pariah. That's Mildew. Fishlegs is justâ€|Fishlegs. He's strong enough to handle hard work, but doesn't go out of his way to train. He's obedient and loyal but lacks the enthusiasm one would want to see in a leader. He's about as educated as anyone can get here, considering that the only book he's ever seen is the Book of Dragons, but not the brightest fellow in terms of common sense. Although at least he tries. Better than the twins, at any rate.

Fishlegs is, without a doubt, mediocre. He'll be another one of those rank-and-file Vikings. The strong, but faceless. Not a prestigious job, but appreciable. People like him are always needed.

But back to Snotloutâ€|he's one of the leaders of that gang of my aforementioned year-mates. I say "one" of the leaders because even though he likes claiming that he's the boss of everyone, everyone he's the "boss" of knows better. The real boss of my generation isâ€|

\_Astrid.\_

Oh, words cannot describe how I feel about her. Where can I start? Her big, intense, sky blue eyes? Her long, flowing, golden braid? Her charming skirt of studded skulls? Her lovely roar as she raises her axe above her head, preparing to throw it to strike perfectly in the heart of a tree?

I only barely tolerate most people in Berk.

Astrid is the sole exception.

Because I.

EFFING.

\_\*\*HATE.\*\_\*

HER!

Ha ha ha. I tricked you, didn't I? You thought I was totally in love with her. You thought that she was the one person who could wade past my shadowy heart and burn away all this indifference with the fiery passions of \_love\_, didn't you?

WELL, YOU'RE \_WRONG!\_

Oh, sure, everyone else absolutely loves her. Snotlout's so completely head over heels for her it's pathetic. Not that I mind, or anything. He can have her. She's only ever given him punches in return for his efforts, and if she ever kisses him it's because she's also serving up a knuckle sandwich and two servings of punch while screaming "Keep it simple, stupid!".

She's a complete angel in everyone's eyes.

Everyone's but mine.

I don't know why I hate her so much. Something about her just \_gets on my nerves\_. \_I just â€“ ugh! Some days I just want to punch her in the face, girl or not. Not that I would. Because I know that she would just slug me right back.

Maybe that's why I hate her so much. She's too much like me. Tiny for a Viking, but horribly dangerous all the same. Ruthlessly efficient. Smart, in both knowledge and common sense. She's a powerful warrior \_and \_strategizer\_. I have my bow. She has her axe. I'm a long-distance fighter. She counters with her skill hand to hand combat. I'm unfriendly and distant. She's just plain violent. I have ingenuity. She has intimidation.

She's strong.

She's popular.

She's \_competition\_.

It makes sense that I'm scared of her. If we were ever to fight, we would be tied. I'm faster than she is, but she's stronger than I am. The winner would ultimately be decided by luck â€“ if she can get in her first shot before I can pile up enough damage, I'm dead. Oh, but I just hate things that are decided solely by luck.

Especially when the odds are not in my favor.

I know that right now, I'm in the lead because of my lead in skill and creativity. No one can beat me in unconventionality, but if she works hard enough she might be able to overcome me in terms of skill one day. And should the village have to choose anyone, in a wholly popularity contest, I know who they would pick.

I don't exactly care about being popular; I just wonder why, of all the people everyone would want, it's \_Astrid\_, She-Who-Is-Superior-to-You-in-Every-Way. I ignore people; she's just plain mean. I wouldn't miss being passed up as heir to Chief, but gods, for \_Astrid\_ to be the one to take that spotâ€|that's just degrading.

Then again, maybe I'd rather it be Astrid than Snotlout, or, Odin forbid, the twins.

And Fishlegs is too socially awkward to ever be considered.

I'm only ever liked when the dragons come. What sort of great Viking warrior shirks from the limelight, and hates noisy war cries and raucous heavy drinking and obnoxious table pounding? Add that to my figure â€“ I'm about the size of a fishbone and half the weight â€“ and I'd be rich for every time someone said,

"I'd have thought the Berk's heroic son of Chief Stoick the Vast would be more impressive-looking."

Of course, that's before I teach them to think before they judge a guy by their size. It doesn't matter how big or strong or tough a bloke is â€“ everyone's "family jewels" are equally weak. And that's why I win every single fight I've ever been in.

Because there's three things you need to know about me.

One: I'm never around when I'm not needed.

Two: I'm never around when I am needed.

And three: I  
â€“

EEEEEEEEEEEEEE

\_\*SCREECH\*

\_\*CRASH\*

"Monstrous Nightmare down! Ready your axes, lads!"

â€“ never miss.

I narrow my eyes and nock another arrow into my crossbow, drawing the string back and locking it at the five hundred fathoms mark. The moonlight gleams across the smooth, polished black surface of the shaft. This is a weapon only I am allowed to use due to calibration issues, although sometimes I let Gobber â€“ the only person I willingly talk to (my father doesn't count; he's the chief and I'm not allowed to say no to him) â€“ help me forge the arrows, since he owns the smithy, after all. Normal arrows wouldn't work against a dragon; they'd never penetrate the thick, scaly hides, assuming it made past all the fire breath without burning up in the first place. Metal doesn't work much better; it's heavy and deforms in the heat, too. I alone know the secret formula to forging the black, fire-proof arrows, and even then I have to reuse them because it takes months to make even one.

Now you can see why no one's allowed to touch my crossbow. There's only eight, and all of them are too valuable to lose.

I'm the only one who never wastes a single arrow.

I always point out after the raids that we really are so lucky to

have monstrous, flying, fire-breathing reptiles running around destroying our village on a regular basis. I mean, think about it. Thanks to them, all of our buildings are always brand-new, and we never get rats or diseases like the other villages when the dragon fire burns it all away. In fact, our village has the lowest rate of age-related illness in the region and, quite possibly, the world.

Of course, Gothi is the only actual "old" person in this place of a few hundred, and she doesn't look like she's going to quit anytime soon. Again, dragon fire. Keeps you on your toes. Pretty good for warding away consumption and disposing of trash and waste when it's not actually burning you alive.

For some reason no one else seems to appreciate my optimism. Not that I care. If you want to send a complaint about me, you can either bring it up directly by trying to find me (pretty much impossible), or whine at my dad and hope that he doesn't squash you under his big hairy feet for interrupting his rare breaks from "I AM THE GREAT AND FEARSOME CHIEF OF BERK, HE WHO PROTECTS AND FEEDS THIS GREAT VILLAGE, SO BOW DOWN TO ME IN AWE AND PAY YOUR RESPECTS" time (also pretty much impossible).

Another dragon down. And another. And another. Here goes.

\_EEEEEEEEEEEEE â€“ the arrow whistles through the air. \_BLAM!

\_Another dragon down. Seven for seven. And now, for my final shot â€“ once I get my eighth dragon for the night, I'm done.

I don't care if the raid's going to go on for three more hours (not that they ever do; the dragons are usually smart enough to retreat at the first signal of shrieking black arrows by now); I am not crawling from all the way up here in Raven's Point back down to a village full of burning screaming Vikings, retrieve my eight arrows, and then all the way back up to Raven's Point to repeat the process. That's just not going to happen. I got my eight dragons. I'm good. Most Vikings get about two or three dragons per raid using the conventional method. I've done more than my fair share in protecting the village. If those backwards, brutish old men would simply decide to change their ways and learn that airborne projectiles are much more effective against airborne assailants than, oh, I don't know, massive axes so heavy they'd sink in half a second, I might be a little more sympathetic.

Eighth dragon, here we go.

\_EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE\_

Hah â€“ huh?

That's oddâ€¦

I haven't launched any arrow yet â€“

\_SNAP\_

\_BOING\_

Oh, \_CRAâ€…

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Just a note: I'm not an Astrid basher. She's one of my favorite characters. However, Toothless is different from Hiccup; since he's the "skilled" one of his species he would more likely clash with the other leader rather than admire her.<strong>

\*\*Thank you for reading, and review, please!\*\*

## 2. Freefall

You know that feeling you get right before you wake up from one of those falling nightmares?

That was me. Only, I was never asleep.

One moment I was there, about to take down my last dragon for the night, and the next, the drawstring of my crossbow was melting.

\_Stupid, stupid, stupid! \_The \_one \_part of the crossbow that \_couldn't \_be rendered fireproof, because it would lose all flexibility, and it happened to be the one part that the entire thing relied upon.

What a drag.

Of course, at the time I wasn't annoyed about \_that\_. I was more concerned with, I don't know, \_not \_dying? I mean, I \_was \_at the top of a giant pine tree, and now I'm hurtling down to the ground. To my death. Well, not quite. The fact that I basically hit every branch on my way down helped slow my descent in a very effective, if painful way. And now â€“ oh, great â€“ I'm \_rolling\_. Down a rocky ravine.

It seemed like hours before my descent finally stopped. And then, the first thing I registered was a sharp, unbearable pain in my leg.

I couldn't help it. I screamed.

I tried to move it, and was met with more pain. I twisted my sore neck around to see, and was met with the ghastly sight of blood and splintered bone. I covered my mouth, gagging, and turned away. As I did so, a flash of light on black hit my eye â€“ the culprit for the terrible break happened to be â€“ oh, ha ha, how ironic â€“ my last arrow. It was protruding out of my flesh at an odd angle, and it didn't take an expert healer to tell me that I was probably never going to walk on that thing again.

Suddenly I felt so much more respect for Gobber.

For the next few minutes, I lay there, hyperventilating. So this was how it was going to be, huh? The greatest Viking ever to be born, about to die alone, in a cove. With his own arrow through his leg. I couldn't move at all. If I didn't die from infection, then surely some animal would find me, and I would be completely defenseless â€“ my crossbow was still at the top of the tree, and there was no way I could get back up there in this state. Maybe if I tried my best to crawl to what appeared to be a lake â€“ I could see the faint glimmers of early morning light across the surface â€“ I wouldn't suffer from dehydration beforehand.

After the initial moments of panic had worn off, however, my brain kicked back into survival mode. I'm a Viking, I told myself. We have stubbornness issues. And if Gobber could live after losing an arm and a leg then I can deal with this.

Of course, when Gobber had his arm and leg bitten off, he was surrounded by his comrades, and they carried him down the street to the healersâ€¦

Suddenly I highly regretted distancing myself from all the villagers. I mean, I'm Toothless. I always wander off on my own to hide for days at a time. Usually no one ever even catches sight of me for weeks. The only people I see on a semi-daily basis are my father (Chief of Berk, and too busy to pay attention to my existence anyway) and Gobber (who actually highly indulges in my disappearing acts).

It suddenly occurred to me that I could completely vanish off the face on the earth, and no one would ever notice me gone. Not because they wouldn't miss me, but because that was simply what was expected of someone like me.

I could hear some animal's shrill keening echoing through the cove, and I curled up as best as I could with my mangled leg, covering my ears and willing it to stop. It wouldn't. It just kept screaming and wouldn't stop. And then I felt a great anger welling up inside of me, made up of all the frustrations and pains and unfairness I ever experienced in the world. Hit with my own arrow. Fallen, and then trapped in a cove, with walls so steep it might as well be vertical. Impossible to climb out of with intact limbs, never mind this.

Me, about to be subjected to the mercy of the elements and wild beasts and illness. Leaving this world in an utterly humiliating and dishonorable manner. I've downed more dragons than anyone, ever, and now I'll die from exhaustion and consumption, and be rendered ineligible for Valhalla. All because of one design failure that I couldn't fix anyway.

My body convulsed, and suddenly my chest was heaving up and down with great, dry sobs. My stomach was retching, but nothing could come out. The great movements of my stomach jostled my injured leg, sending another sharp pain shooting up my spine. The keening returned, and I realized with a start that it was me.

The sun was now peeking over the top of the cove, and I wondered how long I had lain here. For many hours, at least. I sighed, and gingerly turned back to my snapped leg. The blood had dried long ago, but if I didn't do something about the bone soon, it would heal in the wrong way. And for a compound fracture like thisâ€¦I didn't want to think about it.

First things first â€“ get rid of the arrow. I bent back and examined my leg; the pain had dulled to a heavy throb. It still hurt like all the minions of chaos, but at least now it was easier to ignore. I frowned at my own weapon. Unlike a normal arrow, whose head, shaft, and fletching were all composed of different parts and therefore easy to remove with a few twists or knot-untying, my arrow was one big solid mass. One big, solid, metal mass, designed to be strong enough so that not even dragon hide could stand up to it.

I lifted my scrawny arms and glared at them. \_Of all the useless, good-for-nothingâ€\_|\_

I really was too smart for my own good.

At this rate, I would simply have to pull it out. If I pulled it out backwards, the hooked, wider end of the tip would rip a new hole through my old wounds. If I pulled it out frontwards, the fletching would rip an even bigger hole and possibly get stuck.

Decisions, decisions.

I'll spare you the gory details of me trying to get the arrow out. I tried to make it as fast as possible, to get it over with, but there were all these bone fragments in the wayâ€|anyway, the pain came back worse than before, and I was left with a leg that needed to be amputated, only, I didn't have any nice big saws on me.

Just an arrow tip. And while it was sharp and strong enough, and the sharp edge long enough to span my skinny legs (it \_was \_meant for a dragon, after all, and for once I was grateful of my slim figure), the position of the "blade" was all wrong. I needed something to brace both sides of the cut, so that I could use both my hands to bring it down with enough force. Using only the shaft of the arrow on one side would make the cut uneven. And if I tried to put my hands on either side of the arrow tip, I'd have another cut on my hand to worry about.

I spend weeks polishing my arrow tips. Even a soft pat on them can draw blood. Pulling off something like that would cut my hand through to the bone. I couldn't afford that.

Not all hope was lost, however. I was wearing a nice fur vest ofâ€|somethingâ€|The fur wasn't as strong as dragon hide, but it was thicker and softer, and could probably absorb more force. At the very least, if I folded it up, I wouldn't cut myself even if the arrow sliced through the first fur layer.

Pulling myself up into a sitting position, I reached about as far as my hands could allow and ripped some branches off the surrounding shrubbery. I still felt nauseous, and perhaps illness might set in soon, but I had to try. Bracing my back against the rock wall certainly helped some. Arranging the sticks into a passable pile was easy enough. Lighting it?

I closed my eyes and prayed that my idea would work. Because if it didn't, I was done for. I needed a fire; otherwise, the amputation would cause me to bleed to death. And if I didn't amputate, I would surely die of infection. It was impossible for me to set the bone, that was for certain. I didn't have the right tools to make a brace, or remove the splintersâ€|

No giving up now. I closed my eyes, and whipped my arm back, striking the arrowhead against the rock face.

\_bzzt\_

I opened one eye. Dare I hope?

I repeated the action.

Nothing.

I did it again.

Still nothing.

Not even a single spark.

\_bzzt\_

The bushes were rustling. I whipped my head back around and held the arrow in front of me threateningly. If it was some sort of predator, maybe I could still get into Valhalla if I wounded it before it got to me!

EYES.

Two big, green eyes. Staring at me.

Slitted pupils. Oblong shape.

\_bzzt\_

Hissing "no, growling. \_Bzzt, bzzt, bzzt\_. "

I knew what it was.

A dragon.

A bloody dragon.

Suddenly I remembered the night before. Aiming my last arrow for the nightâ€|my string bursting into flameâ€|and then â€" pain. The fire. It must have been a dragon. One of them must have finally wised up and followed the angle of the arrows back to its origin â€" my platform in the forest. And then it had cleverly aimed its breath, not at me, but at the weapon, to ensure that no one else could find it and use it.

If I didn't hate the beasts so much, I'd be impressed at their intelligence.

The intelligence of this one, in particular.

It was still hiding in the bushes, nothing but its eyes visible, crooning softly in that little \_bzzt bzzt bzzt \_sound. What was it doing? Was it going to torture me? Play with the prey before it died? Because I was not going to be toyed with. If I was going to die here, I would die fighting. I could imagine it already â€" a great, monstrous creature, with a great, curved, snakelike neck and horns jutting out all over its faceâ€|great, needlelike, crooked teeth poking every which wayâ€|

I held the arrow point out in front of me, to defend myself. \_Here it comes! \_It's going to be â€"

It wasâ€|

"\_Bzzt.\_"

â€|it wasâ€|

â€|tiny.

I stared down at it. No way. This could not be it. No way.

This thing.

It was barely bigger than a terrible terror. Its head wasn't bulbous and deformed like that of the Nadders, Gronckles, and Zipplebacks, nor was it long and narrow like that of the Nightmare. In fact, it wasâ€|relatively normal shaped. In that its lower jaw was smaller than the upper jaw and positioned behind the rest of the head, instead of jutting out in the front. And the eyes â€" I expected it to be bigger, since the eyes were so big, but insteadâ€|I guess it just had big eyes. Disproportionately big eyes compared to the rest of its face.

And there was pretty much no neck at all. It was like â€" head â€" and then shoulders. The neck was the same thickness as the rest of its head. It was like â€" like a salamander. There was no way this thing took me down.

Plus this thing had nearly noâ€|the best word for it would be decoration. It was generally known that the more dangerous a dragon was, the more exotically it would be portrayed. For example, Gronckles have all those lumps on them, along with that huge head. "I'm definitely the tough guy here." Hideous Zipplebacks â€" come on. They have two heads. "Double Trouble." Don't even let me mention the Nadder. All that tropical coloration and spikes clearly say "DO NOT TOUCH." Monstrous Nightmare, sets itself on fire, bright red. Big fat shiny sign going "Warning â€" fire hazard."

But this thing? It was monochromatic. No lumps or spikes. Not even a dot or spike of color. It was just this reddish, woody sort of forest brown all over. It didn't have claws â€" its feet were too fat and padded for that. More like paws. Bear paws, or something. And its lips completely covered its teeth in resting position. Right now, it was growling at me a little bit, and I think it was safe to assume that those tiny things were the full length of its teeth.

I've never seen anything like it.

I calmed down and forced myself to take a deep breath. Calm down, Toothless. It's probably more dangerous than it looks. You're small and unassuming too, and yet look at your own record. Greater men than you have lost their lives because of underestimating the enemy. It could be a baby, or a seasoned adult, for all you know. Keep your focus up. You're not dead yet. \_

So I continued to hold it at an arm's and an arrow's distance. It circled around me, just out of reach, croaking at me. Almost like it was mocking me. Laughing at me. The great dragon hunter, downed and helpless, with a mangled leg!

It moved even closer and bared its teeth.

I acted quickly and stabbed the arrow out in front of me. The dragon shrieked and leaped back, curling up into a little ball. Its sudden

noise, along with my leg acting up again as I overextended my reach, caused me to drop the arrow. It plopped down onto the grass " growing on a highly inconvenient slope just right there " and my only weapon and general tool for survival rolled away from me.

Right in the direction of the dragon.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN: Review please! Whether you're pointing out a mistake or just writing two words, it really means a lot to me.  
Thanks!\*\*

### 3. Confrontation

"No!" I yelled, but it was no use. The arrow was now way out of my reach, and right where the little dragon could pick it up. I expected it to grab the thing in its mouth and run away, taunting me even more. But it didn't. Instead, it just stared at the arrow curiously. Nudged it back to me " \_to me? " with its nose. It didn't quite make it past the mound, and the arrow rolled back down again.

Okay, now I was \_sure \_that it was messing with me.

I stared at the dragon, unimpressed.

It stared back.

\_Stop beating around the bush, why don't you, and just kill me already! \_I yelled inside my head.

All too soon, my wish was granted.

It bared its teeth again, and jumped at me.

It looked small from its bush, but now that it was a little closer to me, and I was a little closer to death, I have to say I didn't give it enough credit. It was bigger than a Terrible Terror. Not as big as the conventional dragons, but closer to the size of a lynx or another wild hunting cat than a house pet. That thing wasn't a giant, but for a scrawny boy in my situation, a bobcat would be enough to end my life.

I had no more strength to move. I had been struggling all night, and I hadn't eaten for hours. My forehead as well as my leg was starting to burn, and the sun, now high in the sky, wasn't helping any. I leaned my head back against the rock.

\_So this is how it ends.\_

I waited. I waited for the fire blast to the chest. For the creature to burn away at my face, to tear out my throat with its teeth and claws. Before they seemed undersized; now they were bigger than anything set of teeth or claws I had seen before. The creature's teeth may only have been half a finger long, but half a finger was still enough to pierce the throat.

Once again I was struck with the irony of the situation. How many

times did I repeat my personal philosophy, that size or strength didn't count as much as efficiency? And now it was going to happen. One single fire blast in the right place did more to hurt me than a whole Monstrous Nightmare, completely on fire, ever did. And now, one single bite would end my life, and the whole village, which bore scars from all sorts of dragons, would continue on with their daily life, never realizing that I was in trouble until it was too lateâ€!

\_Go on. Do it.\_

I waited.

And waited.

And waited.

And nothing happened.

I opened my eyes again.

Did this monster still seek to taunt me â€"

My eyes widened as I took in the sight before me. The dragonâ€|was no longer gloating. It was still curled up, like that time I had knocked it away. What was it, some sort of coward? It seemed like it. It was one thing to retreat when there was obvious danger. But now, couldn't it tell? I was its prey, and here I was, lamed, crippled, starving, dehydrating, feeling the effects of exhaustion and fever, weak, helpless, deprived of my only weapon. And yet it still wouldn't attack. What sort of dragon was this, anyway? An outcast dragon? Preposterous. They were dragons. They didn't do that sort of social human stuff, with the whole leader and outcast businessâ€|

It was still whining.

And then, it opened its mouth â€"

â€" I waited â€"

â€" and it spat fire â€"

â€" right onto my pile of wood.

My failed fire was suddenly ablaze. I stared from the dancing flames, back to the dragon, and then to the dancing flames again.

How did it know? Dragons set things on fire all the time, but how did it know I wanted to actually build my own fire? Did it see the pile of sticks and somehow draw its own conclusion? Did it see me striking the rock face with the arrow and somehow understand what I was trying to do? How did itâ€|

A soft \_thud \_signaled that something had landed next to me. By instinct I reached out and grabbed it. I felt leathery scales underneath one hand, and a thin, smooth object in the other.

I turned â€" it was the arrow. And I was holding it to the dragon's neck, which I had pinned beneath my hand. I stared back over to the place where the dragon had been standing before. The patch of grass

where the arrow had once rolled to was now empty.

I was going to kill it.

I was \_going \_to \_kill \_it.

\_I \_was going to kill \_it\_.

And I was going to do it now.

This dragon was a smart dragon. It knew that I wanted to set a fire. It knew that I needed my arrow. So why was it doing this? Surely it was smart enough to know that before, I was weak and helpless and of no threat to itâ€|so why was it willingly putting the ability to cause death right back into its enemy's hands?

This dragon.

Was it crazy?

It had the perfect chance to kill me

and instead

it lit my fire

brought me back my arrow

a tool

a weapon

I could kill it

right now

I glared at it

and it stared back at me, green eyes wide, its little feet kicking against the grass, struggling â€“

and I saw fear.

Fear.

This dragon knew fear.

All dragons went for the kill.

So why didn't it?

Whyâ€|why was it doing this?

I hated being confused. I hated not being able to figure things out. The logical thing to do would be to stab it right now. But thenâ€|

I was not a foul monster. That was exactly what a monster would do. Iâ€|I couldn't. It tried to help me, and now I was going to kill it?

It squirmed, and struggled, and stared back up at me with pleading eyes.

\_Kill it kill it kill it the dragon it's a dragon kill kill kill KILL KILL KILL KILL!\_

My hand tensedâ€| I pressed the arrow harder into the dragon's neckâ€| and the size of its eyes grew, and grew, and grewâ€| pupils dilatingâ€|

And for once I could not see a dragon as a monster that raided our hardworking village, but another living thing, just like me. Something that knew mercy, and fear, and maybeâ€|

Could it know something else?...

Could it sate my curiosity?...

Could it give me something different?

Something that Berk could not?

Could it finally bring a change to the seven generations of tradition, where the monotony was so great that even constant battle with flying, fire-breathing beasts was considered common and, dare I say it, normal?

Could these thingsâ€| actually happen?

And before I knew what I was doingâ€|

I let it go.

I let it go.

And before I could see it run,

it had already gone.

\* \* \*

><p>I continued to stare at the patch of grass that the dragon had once occupied.<p>

\_Did I justâ€|\_

\_Yes.\_

\_Did I justâ€|\_

\_Yes. You did.\_

\_I just let a dragon go.\_

\_Yes. Yes, you did.\_

Oh, gods.

The first thing that came to my mind was,

\_That thing is \_fast\_.\_

\_No wonder I've never seen anything like it.\_

My second thought was,

\_My father is going to kill me.\_

And not just my father. All of Berk would be yelling and screaming, in their charming little Viking way, for my severed head mounted on the tip of a pike, should word of this tiny exchange of mercy ever get out.

I mean, it was a dragon! We've been at war for seven generations! If word ever got out that I just let one go "I, the son of a chief, I, the greatest dragon shooter ever known"

Oh, gods. Oh, gods, gods gods gods.

And yet, as I stared at the fire that the little thing had lit for me, I couldn't bring myself to regret it.

I mean, how bad could this really be?

Sure, I just shook hands with the mortal enemy of my people. Except that that little thing wasn't really the mortal enemy of my people. It was just a tiny part of a whole. Vikings and dragons. Were we to be at war, forever? Would we never know peace, ever? Were we just meant to fight until the end of time, until one of us "or perhaps both" were driven to extinction by our bloody, mindless ways? Was it really that bad, for two members of opposing factions to shake hands, if it meant peace and prosperity for all?

The more I thought about it, the less the traditional, prideful ways of the Vikings made sense. The dragons stole from us, but, well, the dragons had been here first. It's in our history. Hamish the first had observed the "featherless birds" flying around here before he commanded his people to start building houses. So, technically, it was their right, to use the land and resources that had long been theirs!"

I closed my eyes and sighed.

Funny, how being close to death changes your outlook on life.

I wondered if my mind would flip right back to where I used to be once I got out of this mess.

If I got out of this mess.

I was unpleasantly reminded of the fact that my survival was still not set in stone by the crackling fire. That was right "I had been about to perform some tricky self-surgery before I was interrupted by the dragon. The thing that was the cause of this in the first place. Directly. Once again, I was the idiot who gave it that opportunity, sitting that high up in a tree without any harnesses or safety measures, using dangerous weapons without any personal armor.

Smoke was starting to show. I threw some more dry twigs on the pile. I should use it before it burned out. I stared at my leg once more,

and winced, but resolved to follow through with this anyway. There was still a very high chance that the amputation would fail, but I had to try. How hard could it be, right? Just hack the limb off and then cauterize it before it bled outâ€|

I warmed the arrow, trying to clean it as best as I could. Then I sawed off the leg of my pants and folded it away from the site of the cut.

This was going to be disgusting.

But I was tough.

I could handle it.

I am a \_Viking. \_I am \_used \_to disgusting. It's just a little blood; what's the big deal, right?

\_Here goes nothingâ€|\_

OKAY OKAY NOT A "LITTLE" BLOOD LOTS OF BLOOD LOTS OF BLOOD STOP IT  
QUICK I THINK I'M GOING TO FAINT

\_YOU LITTLE WUSS\_

SHUT UP

ACK ODIN'S UNDERPANTS THAT HURT LIKE LOKI IN ALL HIS TRICKSTER GLORY

Ahem.

After some awkward struggling I was finally left with a charred stump for my leg. My beautiful, beautiful leg. Not really. I wouldn't be sorry to miss it. Better a leg than all of me, right?

Right?

I think it's the fever talking.

The arrow had been a good choice after all. Sharp enough to make a smooth cut. And the wound had cauterized properly; I wouldn't be bleeding out anytime soon. My discarded piece of leg was still lying off to the side, but I didn't have the strength to move it. It was still really disgusting, by the way. There was still blood and bone everywhere. Yuck. The flies would be coming soon. But I tried to move away. But my arms and legs wouldn't listen to me. I felt like a bag of dirt. The world was blurring. I was thinking in slow motion. Now all that was left was to rest and pray that infection wouldn't set in before I could escape this placeâ€|

My forehead was burningâ€|

The world went black.

End  
file.